



WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH IN SOUTH DAKOTA



*From The
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health*

State Profile 2002

*Delivering on the Nation's promise:
Safety and health at work for all people through prevention.*

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

NIOSH is the primary federal agency responsible for conducting research and making recommendations for the prevention of work-related illness and injury. NIOSH is located in the Department of Health and Human Services in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The NIOSH mission is to provide national and world leadership to prevent work-related illness, injury, disability, and death by gathering information, conducting scientific research, and translating the knowledge gained into products and services. As part of its mission, NIOSH supports programs in every state to improve the health and safety of workers. NIOSH has developed this document to highlight recent NIOSH programs important to workers and employers in South Dakota.

The Burden of Occupational Illness and Injury in South Dakota

- In South Dakota, there are approximately 392,000 individuals employed in the workforce.¹
- In 2000, 35 workers died as a result of workplace injuries.²
- The agriculture, forestry, and fishing industry had the highest number of fatalities, followed by construction.²
- In 1999, the most recent year for which data are available the rate of fatal workplace injuries was 10.8 deaths per 100,000 workers – above the national average rate of 4.5 deaths per 100,000 workers.²

The Cost of Occupational Injury and Illness in South Dakota

In 2000, the most recent year for which data are available, a total of \$76.5 million was paid for workers' compensation claims by South Dakota private insurers and self-insured employers.⁴ This figure does not include compensation paid to workers employed by the federal government and also underestimates the total financial burden for private sector businesses, since only a fraction of health care costs and earnings lost through work injuries and illnesses is covered by workers' compensation. Chronic occupational illnesses like cancer are substantially under-reported in workers' compensation systems because work-relatedness is often difficult to establish.

How NIOSH Prevents Worker Injuries and Diseases in South Dakota

Health Hazard Evaluations (HHEs) and Technical Assistance

NIOSH evaluates workplace hazards and recommends solutions when requested by employers, workers, or state or federal agencies. Since 1993, NIOSH has responded to ten requests for HHEs in South Dakota in a variety of industrial settings, including the following example:

Brookings, South Dakota: Evaluation of Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ) at a University Building

In January 2001, NIOSH received a request by the state's Department of Health to conduct an IEQ HHE at the South Dakota State University Animal Science Center (ASC) in Brookings, South Dakota. Several ASC employees had reported a range of health symptoms including fatigue, headache, sinus or allergy problems, stomach pain, nausea, muscle twitching, shortness of breath, malaise, and diarrhea. Symptoms persisted even after engineering changes and cleaning of the building ventilation systems had occurred, according to the recommendations of a contractor who had completed an industrial hygiene investigation. NIOSH recommendations included: following the recommendations made by the contractor; having occupational and environmental health specialists from the university carefully investigate all solvent use and related work practices in the ASC; prohibiting eating and drinking in the laboratories; and inspecting all chemical hoods used in the ASC to ensure they operate according to specifications.

Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program

The purpose of the NIOSH Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program is to determine factors that cause or contribute to fire fighter deaths suffered in the line of duty. NIOSH uses data from these investigations to generate fatality investigation reports and a database of case results that guides the development of prevention and intervention activities. The following fire fighter fatality investigation was conducted in South Dakota:

South Dakota: Wildland Fire Claims the Life of One Volunteer Fire Fighter and Injures Another

In March 2000, a 62-year-old male volunteer fire fighter died from complications due to burns received during a wildland fire operation that also left another fire fighter injured. NIOSH investigators concluded that, to minimize the risk of similar occurrences, fire departments should: ensure that all fire fighters receive training certifications; ensure that standard operating procedures are developed and implemented; and provide fireground personnel with personal protective equipment.

Additional information regarding NIOSH services and activities can be accessed through the NIOSH home page at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/homepage.html> or by calling the NIOSH 800-number at 1-800-356-NIOSH (1-800-356-4674).

¹U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Current Population Survey, 2000.

²DOL, BLS in cooperation with state and federal agencies, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 1999-2000.

³National Academy of Social Insurance, *Workers' Compensation: Benefits, Coverage, and Costs, 2000 New Estimates*, May 2002.

